Snow likely to bring disruption this weekend

3 February 2012 - This weekend will see a marked change in the weather as the dry spell makes way for snow and ice for many parts.

Thursday night saw temperatures across the UK fall to between -6 °C and -8 °C in many areas and as low as -11.3 °C at Sennybridge, Powys, Wales.

Snow showers are expected along parts of the eastern coastline into the weekend but most places will continue to see bright, dry and cold conditions until Saturday.

Things are set to change as we go through Saturday, however, as an Atlantic front moves in from the west.

Paul Gundersen, Deputy Chief Forecaster at the Met Office, said: "As this front moves in from the west it will come up against cold air and we're likely to see a mixture of rain, sleet and snow across the UK.

"It's a finely balanced situation, so there is some uncertainty about which areas will see the most significant snowfall, but at the moment the risk is highest in central and eastern areas where we could see up to 5-10cm of snow.

"With this risk of snow and ice over the next few days it is important people stay up to date with our weather forecasts and warnings for the latest information."

Met Office weather forecast for risk of snow this weekend (PDF, 86 kB)

The rain, sleet and snow will be replaced by dry and frosty weather overnight into Sunday with ice expected to be an additional hazard in many areas for Sunday.

Thereafter this east/west split is likely to continue, with the south and east remaining cold with ice and freezing fog likely. The north and west should be milder.

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Met Office weather forecast for risk of snow this weekend

Paul Gundersen – Deputy Chief Forecaster

Over the last few days we've seen the coldest spell of the winter across at least a good part of the UK and the reason for that is a large area of high pressure, quite intense high pressure, centred over Russia and Scandinavia. What that's allowed is very cold air to sweep into the UK from the east from a very cold continental source. Looking at the map to the right of me here is what you can see, if this is the UK through here and here's continental Europe, that the area of high pressure centred over Scandinavia which I mentioned earlier, is allowing this very cold air to spread in from the east and the blue colours here show that cold air spreading in from the east. Out to the west here these orange and green colours, that shows the milder air which is trying to make a comeback. This will cause us some problems as we go into the weekend. Before that happens there is also the risk of snow showers spreading in off the North sea and these blue symbols here show where the computer model expects the snow showers to be. What we expect is a risk of a light covering of snow across parts of East Anglia and Kent over the next couple of nights perhaps, you may wake up to a slight covering in these areas. The main problems I mentioned really is the comeback of the milder air from the west and the kind of battle ground scenario which its going to lead to. If I just step through the sequence here into Saturday you can see here that by midday Saturday roughly speaking we expect precipitation to be in this kind of area so much of Scotland, Wales and the South West. As it bumps into the colder air further east that's where we start to see the problems and these blue symbols here are where the computer model thinks it turns to snow. As we go into the period Saturday night into Sunday morning which is the next frame, more of that turns to snow. The reason for that is that the front comes up against the block of high pressure and cold air it's going to slow down and come to a grinding holt, that increases the risk of snow and also the longevity of the snow as well. Now at the moment we are expecting an area of snow to develop across a good part of England and perhaps east Wales through late Saturday into Sunday. But the timing and extent of that is still rather uncertain. Where it does occur which I think is most likely in this kind of area in here across perhaps the Midlands and the east of England. Something of the order of 5 to 10 centimetres but that's still rather uncertain at the moment. Your best bet really is to stay tuned to the forecast over the next few days particularly if you have travel plans for Saturday night and Sunday morning.

So what happens after the weekend? Well the snow in the south east should die out during the course of Sunday leaving a very cold set up because this area of high pressure to the east and the cold air. But it won't give way very easily, it's very stubborn. At the same time Atlantic weather fronts and milder air will try and push in at the west but come up against this block of high pressure and increasingly slow down and stall. So I think for eastern parts of the country, probably staying cold much of next week whilst further west more in the way of rain at times and generally on the milder side.